

[19 April, 2001]

RAJYA SABHA

Problems of Indian Traders in Nepal

† 3696. PROF. R.B.S. VARMA: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that traders and citizens of Indian origin residing in Nepal are not being treated well;

(b) if so, the steps taken by Government so far in this regard; and

(c) the action, the Nepal Government have assured to take in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI KRISHNAMRAJU) : (a) There are a large number of people of Indian origin in Nepal, including traders, of whom some have been living there for several generations. Many of them have been denied Nepalese citizenship and are accordingly not entitled to benefits that are due to other citizens of Nepal.

(b) and (c) The problems being faced by businessmen and traders of India and Indian origin were comprehensively discussed when the Foreign Secretaries of India and Nepal met in New Delhi on January 30-31, 2001 with a view to address them effectively. Further discussions between the two countries are envisaged soon.

Sale of destroyed pieces of Buddha

3697. SHRI RAMDAS AGARWAL: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn to the news-item published in the 'Hindustan Times' dated 2nd April, 2001 captioned "Blown up Buddha relics on sale in Pakistan's Peshawar Bazaar and traders in Pak eager to sell to tourists";

(b) whether UNESCO's spokesman has reportedly said that U.N.

† Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

body would frown on any museum paying the Taliban for a relic of something they had deliberately destroyed;

(c) if so, what is Government's reaction thereto; and

(d) whether it is possible for Indian Government to get all such prices and put them together in Bodh Gaya?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI KRISHNAMRAJU) : (a) to (d) Yes, Sir. Government has seen the 'Hindustan Times' report.

The Director General of UNESCO has, on several occasions, stressed that efforts will continue to save the remaining pre-Islamic Artifacts in Afghanistan. To this end the Director General has appealed to Dealers, Collectors and Members of States to fight against the traffic in Afghan cultural properties and drawn attention to the obligation of State Parties to the 1970 UNESCO Convention on the Means of Prohibition and Prevention the Illicit Import, Export and Traffic of Ownership of Cultural Property which seeks to protect cultural property against theft, illicit exports and wrongful alienation.

In a statement to both Houses of Parliament made on 2nd March, 2001, External Affairs Minister had, *inter-alia*, said that if the Taliban did not wish to retain this inheritance, India would be happy to arrange for the transfer of all these artifacts to India where they would be kept safely and preserved for all mankind, in the full knowledge and clear understanding that they were, in the first place and above all, treasures of the Afghan people themselves.

Government will adhere to relevant UN Conventions on the Import, Export and Ownership of Cultural property. Government deplores attempts at traffic in Afghan Cultural properties.